

# A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON











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*By*

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON



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CHICAGO

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# TO ALISON CUNNINGHAM

FROM HER BOY

**F**OR the long nights you lay awake  
And watched for my unworthy sake:  
For your most comfortable hand  
That led me through the uneven land:  
For all the story-books you read:  
For all the pains you comforted:  
For all you pitied, all you bore,  
In sad and happy days of yore:—  
My second Mother, my first Wife,  
The angel of my infant life—  
From the sick child, now well and old,  
Take, nurse, the little book you hold!

And grant it, Heaven, that all who read  
May find as dear a nurse at need,  
And every child who lists my rhyme,  
In the bright, fireside, nursery clime,  
May hear it in as kind a voice  
As made my childish days rejoice!

R. L. S.





## BED IN SUMMER

In winter I get up at night  
And dress by yellow candle-light.  
In summer, quite the other way,  
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see  
The birds still hopping on the tree,  
Or hear the grown-up people's feet  
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,  
When all the sky is clear and blue,  
And I should like so much to play,  
To have to go to bed by day?





## A THOUGHT

It is very nice to think  
The world is full of meat and drink,  
With little children saying grace  
In every Christian kind of place.

## AT THE SEASIDE

When I was down beside the sea,  
A wooden spade they gave to me  
To dig the sandy shore.

My holes were empty like a cup.  
In every hole the sea came up,  
Till it could come no more.



## YOUNG NIGHT THOUGHT

All night long and every night,  
When my mamma puts out the light,  
I see the people marching by,  
As plain as day, before my eye.

Armies and emperors and kings,  
All carrying different kinds of things,  
And marching in so grand a way,  
You never saw the like by day.

So fine a show was never seen  
At the great circus on the green;  
For every kind of beast and man  
Is marching in that caravan.

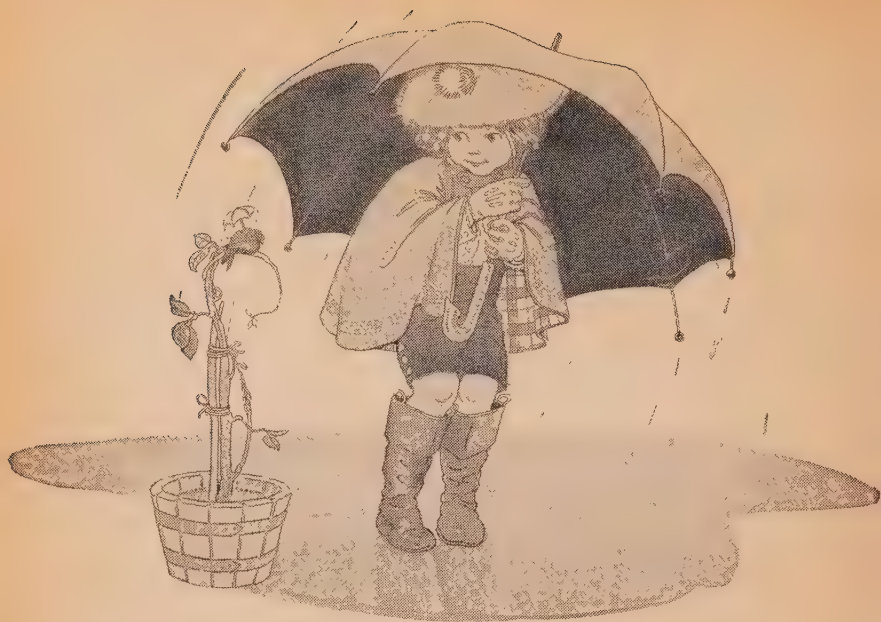
At first they move a little slow,  
But still the faster on they go,  
And still beside them close I keep  
Until we reach the Town of Sleep.



## WHOLE DUTY OF CHILDREN

A child should always say what's true  
And speak when he is spoken to,  
And behave mannerly at table;  
At least as far as he is able.





## RAIN

The rain is raining all around,  
It falls on field and tree,  
It rains on the umbrellas here,  
And on the ships at sea.

## PIRATE STORY

Three of us afloat in the meadow by the swing,  
Three of us aboard in the basket on the lea.  
Winds are in the air, they are blowing in the spring,  
And waves are on the meadow like the waves  
there are at sea.

Where shall we adventure, to-day that we're afloat,  
Wary of the weather and steering by a star?  
Shall it be to Africa, a-steering of the boat,  
To Providence, or Babylon, or off to Malabar?

Hi! but here's a squadron a-rowing on the sea—  
Cattle on the meadow a-charging with a roar!  
Quick, and we'll escape them, they're as mad as  
they can be,  
The wicket is the harbor and the garden is the  
shore.





## FOREIGN LANDS

Up into the cherry tree  
Who should climb but little me?  
I held the trunk with both my hands  
And looked abroad on foreign lands.

I saw the next door garden lie,  
Adorned with flowers before my eye,  
And many pleasant places more  
That I had never seen before.

I saw the dimpling river pass  
And be the sky's blue looking-glass;  
The dusty roads go up and down,  
With people tramping in to town.

If I could find a higher tree,  
Farther and farther I should see,  
To where the grown-up river slips  
Into the sea among the ships,

To where the roads on either hand  
Lead onward into fairy land,  
Where all the children dine at five,  
And all the playthings come alive.







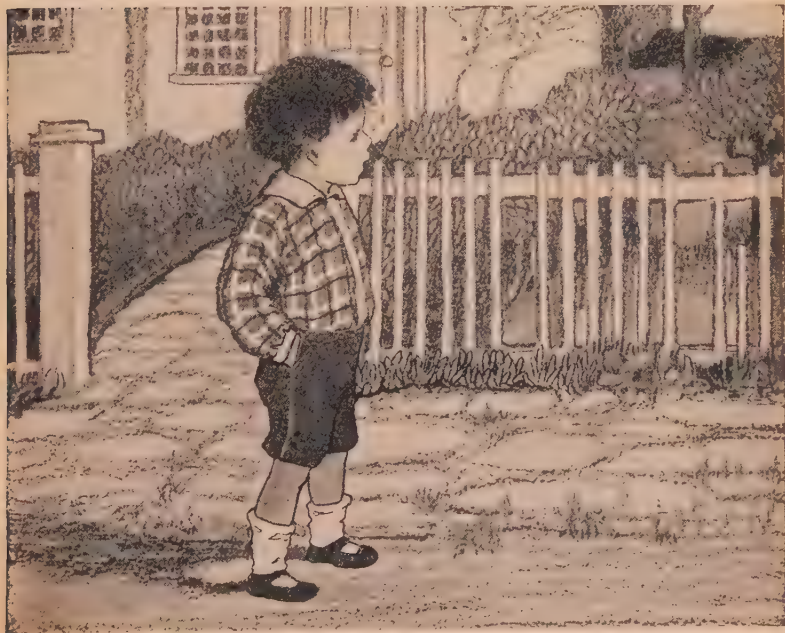
## WINDY NIGHTS

Whenever the moon and stars are set,  
Whenever the wind is high,  
All night long in the dark and wet,  
A man goes riding by.  
Late in the night when the fires are out,  
Why does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,  
And ships are tossed at sea,  
By, on the highway, low and loud,  
By at the gallop goes he.  
By at the gallop he goes, and then  
By he comes back at the gallop again.

## TRAVEL

I should like to rise and go  
Where the golden apples grow;—  
Where below another sky  
Parrot islands anchored lie,  
And, watched by cockatoos and goats,  
Lonely Crusoes building boats;—  
Where in sunshine reaching out  
Eastern cities, miles about,



Are with mosque and minaret  
Among sandy gardens set,  
And the rich goods from near and far  
Hang for sale in the bazaar;—  
Where the Great Wall round China goes,  
And on one side the desert blows,  
And with bell and voice and drum,  
Cities on the other hum;—  
Where are forests, hot as fire,  
Wide as England, tall as a spire,  
Full of apes and cocoa-nuts  
And the negro hunters' huts;—  
Where the knotty crocodile  
Lies and blinks in the Nile,  
And the red flamingo flies  
Hunting fish before his eyes;—  
Where in jungles, near and far,  
Man-devouring tigers are,  
Lying close and giving ear  
Lest the hunt be drawing near,  
Or a comer-by be seen  
Swinging in a palanquin;—  
Where among the desert sands  
Some deserted city stands,  
All its children, sweep and prince,  
Grown to manhood ages since,

Not a foot in street or house,  
Not a stir of child or mouse,  
And when kindly falls the night,  
In all the town no spark of light.  
There I'll come when I'm a man  
With a camel caravan;  
Light a fire in the gloom  
Of some dusty dining room;  
See the pictures on the walls,  
Heroes, fights, and festivals;  
And in a corner find the toys  
Of the old Egyptian boys.





## SINGING

Of speckled eggs the birdie  
sings,  
And nests among the  
trees;  
The sailor sings of ropes  
and things  
In ships upon the seas.

The children sing in far  
Japan,  
The children sing in  
Spain;  
The organ with the organ  
man  
Is singing in the rain.



## LOOKING FORWARD

When I am grown to man's estate  
I shall be very proud and great,  
And tell the other girls and boys  
Not to meddle with my toys.



## A GOOD PLAY

We built a ship upon the stairs,  
All made of the back-bedroom chairs,  
And filled it full of sofa pillows  
To go a-sailing on the billows.

We took a saw and several nails,  
And water in the nursery pails;  
And Tom said, "Let us also take  
An apple and a slice of cake"—  
Which was enough for Tom and me  
To go a-sailing on, till tea.

We sailed along for days and days,  
And had the very best of plays;  
But Tom fell out and hurt his knee,  
So there was no one left but me.



## WHERE GO THE BOATS?

Dark brown is the river,  
Golden is the sand.  
It flows along forever,  
With trees on either  
hand.

Green leaves a-floating,  
Castles of the foam,  
Boats of mine a-boating—  
Where will all come  
home?

On goes the river  
And out past the mill,  
Away down the valley,  
Away down the hill.

Away down the river,  
A hundred miles or  
more,  
Other little children  
Shall bring my boats  
ashore.



## AUNTIE'S SKIRTS

Whenever Auntie moves around,  
Her dresses make a curious sound.  
They trail behind her up the floor,  
And trundle after through the door.

## THE LAND OF COUNTERPANE

When I was sick and lay a-bed,  
I had two pillows at my head,  
And all my toys beside me lay  
To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so  
I watched my leaden soldiers go,  
With different uniforms and drills,  
Among the bed-clothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets  
All up and down among the sheets;  
Or brought my trees and houses out,  
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still  
That sits upon the pillow-hill,  
And sees before him, dale and plain,  
The pleasant Land of Counterpane.

## THE LAND OF NOD

From breakfast on through all the day  
At home among my friends I stay;  
But every night I go abroad  
Afar into the Land of Nod.

All by myself I have to go,  
With none to tell me what to do—  
All alone beside the streams  
And up the mountain-sides of dreams.

The strangest things are there for me,  
Both things to eat and things to see,  
And many frightening sights abroad  
Till morning in the Land of Nod.

Try as I like to find the way,  
I never can get back by day,  
Nor can remember plain and clear  
The curious music that I hear.





## MY SHADOW

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him is more than I can  
see.

He is very, very like me from the heels up to the  
head;

And I see him jump before me, when I jump into  
my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to  
grow—

Not at all like proper children, which is always very  
slow;

For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-rubber  
ball,

And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of  
him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to  
play,

And can only make a fool of me in every sort of  
way.

He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;  
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow  
sticks to me!



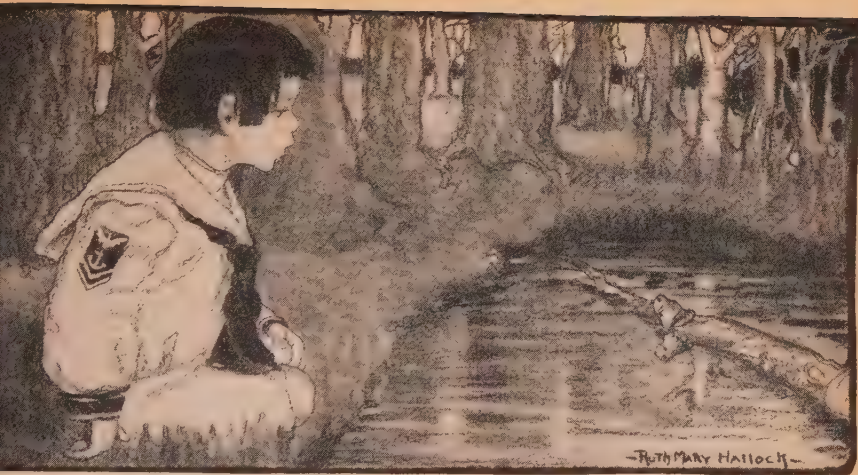
One morning, very early, before the sun was up,  
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;  
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,  
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep  
in bed.

## SYSTEM

Every night my prayers I say,  
And get my dinner every day;  
And every day that I've been good,  
I get an orange after food.

The child that is not clean and neat,  
With lots of toys and things to eat,  
He is a naughty child, I'm sure—  
Or else his dear papa is poor.





## A GOOD BOY

I woke before the morning, I was happy all the day,  
I never said an ugly word, but smiled and stuck to  
play.

And now at last the sun is going down behind the  
wood,  
And I am very happy, for I know that I've been good.

My bed is waiting cool and fresh, with linen smooth  
and fair,  
And I must off to sleep in-by, and not forget my  
prayer.

I know that, till to-morrow I shall see the sun arise,  
No ugly dream shall fright my mind, no ugly sight  
my eyes,

But slumber hold me tightly till I waken in the  
dawn,  
And hear the thrushes singing in the lilacs round  
the lawn.

### ESCAPE AT BEDTIME

The lights from the parlor and kitchen shone out  
Through the blinds and the windows and bars;  
And high overhead and all moving about,  
There were thousands of millions of stars.  
There ne'er were such thousands of leaves on a tree,  
Nor of people in church or the Park,  
As the crowds of the stars that looked down upon me,  
And that glistened and winked in the dark.

The Dog, and the Plough, and the Hunter, and all,  
And the star of the sailor, and Mars,  
These shone in the sky, and the pail by the wall  
Would be half full of water and stars.  
They saw me at last, and they chased me with cries,  
And they soon had me packed into bed;  
But the glory kept shining bright in my eyes,  
And the stars going round in my head.





## MARCHING SONG

Bring the comb and play upon it!  
Marching, here we come!  
Willie cocks his highland bonnet,  
Johnnie beats the drum.

Mary Jane commands the party,  
Peter leads the rear;  
Feet in time, alert and hearty,  
Each a Grenadier!

All in the most martial manner  
Marching double-quick;  
While the napkin, like a banner,  
Waves upon the stick!

Here's enough of fame and pillage,  
Great commander Jane!  
Now that we've been round the village,  
Let's go home again.

## THE COW

The friendly cow all red and white,  
I love with all my heart;  
She gives me cream with all her might,  
To eat with apple-tart.

She wanders lowing here and there,  
And yet she cannot stray,  
All in the pleasant open air,  
The pleasant light of day;

And blown by all the winds that pass  
And wet with all the showers,  
She walks among the meadow grass  
And eats the meadow flowers.





## HAPPY THOUGHT

The world is so full of a number  
of things,  
I'm sure we should all be as happy  
as kings.

## THE WIND

I saw you toss the kites on high  
And blow the birds about the sky;  
And all around I heard you pass,  
Like ladies' skirts across the grass—  
    O wind, a-blowing all day long,  
    O wind, that sings so loud a song!

I saw the different things you did,  
But always you yourself you hid.  
I felt you push, I heard you call,  
I could not see yourself at all—  
    O wind, a-blowing all day long,  
    O wind, that sings so loud a song!

O you that are so strong and cold,  
O blower, are you young or old?  
Are you a beast of field and tree,  
Or just a stronger child than me?  
    O wind, a-blowing all day long,  
    O wind, that sings so loud a song!



## KEEPSAKE MILL

Over the borders, a sin without pardon,  
    Breaking the branches and crawling below,  
Out through the breach in the wall of the garden,  
    Down by the banks of the river, we go.

Here is the mill with the humming of thunder,  
    Here is the weir with the wonder of foam,  
Here is the sluice with the race running under—  
    Marvelous places, though handy to home!

Sounds of the village grow stiller and stiller,  
    Stiller the note of the birds on the hill;  
Dusty and dim are the eyes of the miller,  
    Deaf are his ears with the moil of the mill.

Years may go by, and the wheel in the river  
    Wheel as it wheels for us, children, to-day,  
Wheel and keep roaring and foaming forever  
    Long after all of the boys are away.

Home from the Indies and home from the ocean,  
    Heroes and soldiers we all shall come home;  
Still we shall find the old mill wheel in motion,  
    Turning and churning that river to foam.

You with the bean that I gave when we quarreled,  
I with your marble of Saturday last,  
Honored and old and all gaily appareled,  
Here we shall meet and remember the past.



## GOOD AND BAD CHILDREN

Children, you are very little,  
And your bones are very brittle;  
If you would grow great and stately,  
You must try to walk sedately.

You must still be bright and quiet,  
And content with simple diet;  
And remain, through all bewild'ring,  
Innocent and honest children.

Happy hearts and happy faces,  
Happy play in grassy places—  
That was how, in ancient ages,  
Children grew to kings and sages.

But the unkind and the unruly,  
And the sort who eat unduly,  
They must never hope for glory—  
Theirs is quite a different story!

Cruel children, crying babies,  
All grow up as geese and gabies,  
Hated, as their age increases,  
By their nephews and their nieces.

### FOREIGN CHILDREN

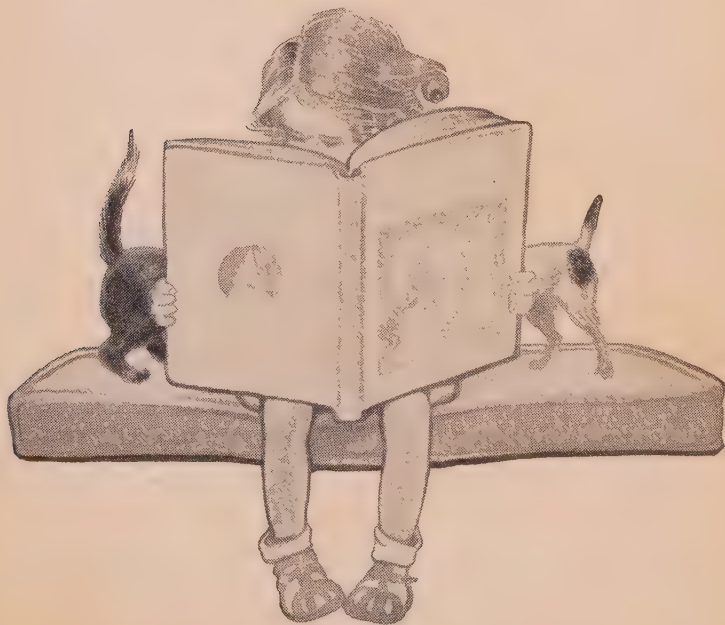
Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,  
Little frosty Eskimo,  
Little Turk or Japanee,  
O! don't you wish that you were me?

You have seen the scarlet trees  
And the lions over seas;  
You have eaten ostrich eggs,  
And turned the turtles off their legs.

Such a life is very fine,  
But it's not so nice as mine:  
You must often, as you trod,  
Have wearied *not* to be abroad.

You have curious things to eat,  
I am fed on proper meat;  
You must dwell beyond the foam,  
But I am safe and live at home.

Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,  
Little frosty Eskimo,  
Little Turk or Japanee,  
O! don't you wish that you were me?





## THE SUN'S TRAVELS

The sun is not abed, when I  
At night upon my pillow lie;  
Still round the earth his way he takes,  
And morning after morning makes.

While here at home, in shining day,  
We round the sunny garden play,  
Each little Indian sleepy-head  
Is being kissed and put to bed.

And when at eve I rise from tea,  
Day dawns beyond the Atlantic Sea,  
And all the children in the West  
Are getting up and being dressed.



## THE LAMPLIGHTER

My tea is nearly ready and the sun has left the sky.  
It's time to take the window to see Leerie going by;  
For every night at tea-time and before you take  
your seat,

With lantern and with ladder he comes posting  
up the street.

Now Tom would be a driver and Maria go  
to sea,

And my papa's a banker and as rich as he can be;  
But I, when I am stronger and can choose what I'm  
to do,

O Leerie, I'll go round at night and light the lamps  
with you!

For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the  
door,

And Leerie stops to light it as he lights so many  
more;

And oh! before you hurry by, with ladder and with  
light,

O Leerie, see a little child and nod to him to-night!



## MY BED IS A BOAT

My bed is like a little boat;  
Nurse helps me in when I embark;  
She girds me in my sailor's coat  
And starts me in the dark.

At night, I go on board and say  
Good-night to all my friends on shore;  
I shut my eyes and sail away,  
And see and hear no more.

And sometimes things to bed I take,  
As prudent sailors have to do:  
Perhaps a slice of wedding-cake,  
Perhaps a toy or two.

All night across the dark we steer;  
But when the day returns at last,  
Safe in my room, beside the pier,  
I find my vessel fast.

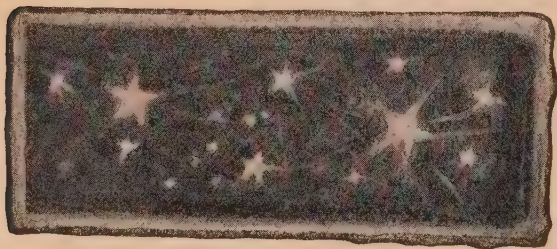


## THE MOON

The moon has a face like the clock in the hall;  
She shines on thieves on the garden wall,  
On streets and fields and harbor quays,  
And birdies asleep in the forks of the trees.

The squalling cat and the squeaking mouse,  
The howling dog by the door of the house,  
The bat that lies in bed at noon,  
All love to be out by the light of the moon.

But all of the things that belong to the day  
Cuddle to sleep to be out of her way;  
And flowers and children close their eyes  
Till up in the morning the sun shall arise.









## THE SWING

How do you like to go up in a swing,  
Up in the air so blue?  
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing  
Ever a child can do!

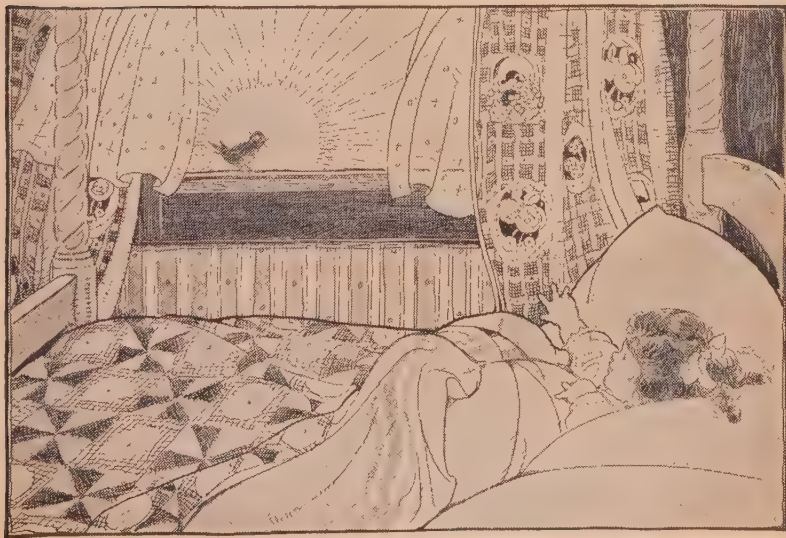
Up in the air and over the wall,  
Till I can see so wide,  
Rivers and trees and cattle and all  
Over the countryside—



Till I look down on the garden green,  
Down on the roof so brown—  
Up in the air I go flying again,  
Up in the air and down!

## TIME TO RISE

A birdie with a yellow bill  
Hopped upon the window sill,  
Cocked his shining eye and said:  
“Ain’t you ’shamed, you sleepy-head?”



## LOOKING-GLASS RIVER

Smooth it slides upon its travel,  
Here a wimple, there a gleam—  
O the clean gravel!  
O the smooth stream!

Sailing blossoms, silver fishes,  
Paven pools as clear as air—  
How a child wishes  
To live down there!

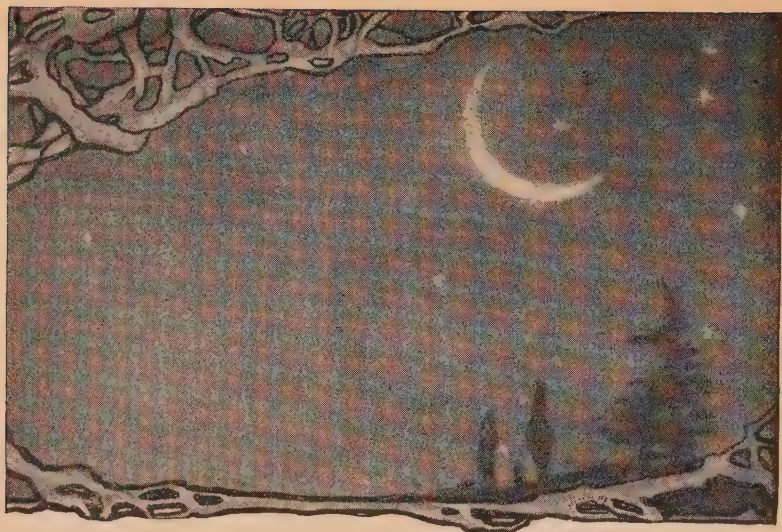
We can see our colored faces  
Floating on the shaken pool  
Down in cool places,  
Dim and very cool;

Till a wind or water wrinkle,  
Dipping marten, plumping trout,  
Spreads in a twinkle  
And blots all out.

See the rings pursue each other;  
All below grows black as night,  
Just as if mother  
Had blown out the light!

Patience, children, just a minute—  
See the spreading circles die;  
The stream and all in it  
Will clear by-and-by.





## FAIRY BREAD

Come up here, O dusty feet!  
Here is fairy bread to eat.  
Here in my retiring room,  
    Children, you may dine  
On the golden smell of broom  
    And the shade of pine;  
And when you have eaten well,  
Fairy stories hear and tell.

## FROM A RAILWAY CARRIAGE

Faster than fairies, faster than witches,  
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches,  
And charging along like troops in a battle,  
All through the meadows the horses and cattle:  
All of the sights of the hill and the plain  
Fly as thick as driving rain;  
And ever again, in the wink of an eye,  
Painted stations whistle by.

Here is a child who clambers and scrambles,  
All by himself, and gathering brambles;  
Here is a tramp who stands and gazes;  
And there is the green for stringing the daisies!  
Here is a cart run away in the road,  
Lumping along with man and load;  
And here is a mill and there is a river:  
Each a glimpse and gone forever!







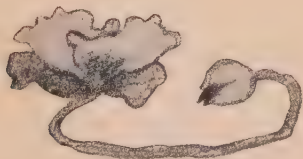
## THE HAYLOFT

Through all the pleasant meadow-side  
The grass grew shoulder-high,  
Till the shining scythes went far and wide  
And cut it down to dry.

These green and sweetly smelling crops  
They led in wagons home;  
And they piled them here in mountain-tops  
For mountaineers to roam.

Here is Mount Clear, Mount Rusty-Nail,  
Mount Eagle and Mount High;  
The mice that in these mountains dwell,  
No happier are than I!

O what a joy to clamber there,  
O what a place for play,  
With the sweet, the dim, the dusty air,  
The happy hills of hay!





## FAREWELL TO THE FARM

The coach is at the door at last;  
The eager children, mounting fast  
And kissing hands, in chorus sing:  
Good-bye, good-bye, to everything!

To house and garden, field and lawn,  
The meadow-gates we swang upon,  
To pump and stable, tree and swing,  
Good-bye, good-bye, to everything!

And fare you well for evermore,  
O ladder at the hayloft door,  
O hayloft where the cobwebs cling.  
Good-bye, good-bye, to everything!



Crack goes the whip, and off we go;  
The trees and houses smaller grow;  
Last, round the woody turn we swing:  
Good-bye, good-bye, to everything!



# NORTH-WEST PASSAGE

## 1. GOOD-NIGHT

When the bright lamp is carried in,  
The sunless hours again begin;  
O'er all without, in field and lane,  
The haunted night returns again.

Now we behold the embers flee  
About the firelit hearth; and see  
Our faces painted as we pass,  
Like pictures, on the window-glass.

Must we to bed indeed? Well then,  
Let us arise and go like men,  
And face with an undaunted tread  
The long black passage up to bed.

Farewell, O brother, sister, sire!  
O pleasant party round the fire!  
The songs you sing, the tales you tell,  
Till far to-morrow, fare ye well!



## 2. SHADOW MARCH

All round the house is the jet-black night;  
It stares through the window-pane;  
It crawls in the corners, hiding from the light,  
And it moves with the moving flame.



Now my little heart goes a-beating like a drum,  
With the breath of the Bogie in my hair;  
And all round the candle the crooked shadows  
come,  
And go marching along up the stair.

The shadow of the balusters, the shadow of the  
lamp,  
The shadow of the child that goes to bed—  
All the wicked shadows coming, tramp, tramp,  
tramp,  
With the black night overhead.



### 3. IN PORT

Last, to the chamber where I lie  
My fearful footsteps patter nigh,  
And come from out the cold and gloom  
Into my warm and cheerful room.

There, safe arrived, we turn about  
To keep the coming shadows out,  
And close the happy door at last  
On all the perils that we passed.

Then, when mamma goes by to bed,  
She shall come in with tip-toe tread,  
And see me lying warm and fast  
And in the Land of Nod at last.

Betty Anne McCabe

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